Close CIA Links To Mounties Reported in Probe

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OTTTAWA — Reports of close links between the CIA and the security unit of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police have emerged in the public examination of alleged spying activities by the Mounties.

Questions concerning relations with the CIA came up in the House of Commons several times this week in discussions of the intelligence-gathering methods of the Mounties, whose responsibilities include functions similar to those of the FBI in the United States.

Mention of the CIA is part of an unfolding drama here that has filled many columns of newspaper space and much radio and television news time for weeks.

THE MOUNTIES, have been under fire in Parliament for weeks, and are the subject of a judicial investigation in Montreal and pending scrutiny by a federal commission in Ottawa. Involved are charges that the security unit of the force has committed illegal break-ins and other questionable activities.

The federal government has gone to court to try to limit the Montreal inquiry to specific allegations of illegal action by the Mounties in Quebec Province. Critics have charged the authorities, including Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, with attempting to cover up questionable procedures in a manner reminiscent of Watergate — an analogy Trudeau rejects.

A reported CIA role in the continuing drama was first mentioned in Parliament this week in connection with attacks by opposition members on an operation known as Featherbed, involving the collecting of dossiers said to contain intimate information on senior officials, including Trudeau. Solicitor General Francis Fox, the cabinet member responsible for the Mounties, has acknowledged the existence of the files but has refused details.

TOM COSSITT, a Progressive-Conservative Party member of the Commons from Ontario, referred to a report that the CIA had interrogated the retired head of a security unit who has been linked to the Featherbed operation. The officer, Leslie J. Bennett, denied the report from his retirement home in Perth, Australia.

The Toronto Globe and Mail yesterday listed CIA connections with Canada among eight featured articles on Mounties and security affairs. The paper reported, among other things, that the CIA had given training in intelligence techniques to members of the Mounties and other departments of the government.

The newspaper quoted Victor Marchetti, co-author of a controversial book, "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence," as saying that the Canadian government had submitted secret court testimony supporting the agency's unsuccessful legal effort to prevent its publication.

Marchetti, a former CIA officer who wrote the book in collaboration with John Marks, was quoted as saying that Canada was concerned that disclosure of the range of cooperation between the CIA and Canadian agencies could "cause grave diplomatic eruptions between Canada and the United States."

"The biggest thing they did for us," Marchetti was quoted as saying of Canadian intelligence operations for the CIA, "was to keep an eye on deserters and draft dodgers because we had no way of keeping an eye on them."